



Veteran Community Partnerships
T O O L K I T

2021 - 2024



VCP Vision

To ensure Veteran choice in their access to care, services, and benefits through organized VA and community partnerships.

VCP Mission

To empower collaborative action between VA and community partners to develop and expand personalized options for Veterans.

To learn more about Veteran Community Partnerships or about hosting a VISN-wide VCP training, contact VCP@va.gov.



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**19
million
Veterans
in the
U.S.**



**9 million
Veterans
enrolled
in VHA**



***50% over
age 65***



***70% seek care
and services at VA
and in community***





Introduction

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) recognizes that collaboration is essential between federal, state and local agencies, academic institutions, private health care providers, non-profits and others in our communities to effectively meet the needs of Veterans, and their families, caregivers and survivors.

Through partnerships we can add depth and breadth to our community impact and better support our nation's Veterans and their families.

Navigating VA and other health care systems can be overwhelming for many Veterans and their families. Knowing who to contact, what is available, how to apply and where to go can take a toll on any person and their family or other support system.

Even though VHA is the largest integrated health care system in the United States, streamlined coordination and access of healthcare services for Veterans can still be a challenge. Consider these facts:

- Currently, there are about 19 million Veterans in the United States; about 9 million are enrolled in VA and 50% of these Veterans are over 65.
- In addition to accessing their VA health benefits, 70% of Veterans who get care from VA obtain health care services from a non-VA community provider.

These statistics alone show that strong and healthy partnerships need to be developed and nurtured among VA and community providers, agencies and service organizations to provide the coordinated quality health care that Veterans and their families deserve.

Veteran Community Partnerships (VCP) provide an effective, adaptable and useful way to help VA facilities establish and nurture community partnerships to address the broad spectrum of health care needs of Veterans and their families.



Purpose of the VCP Toolkit

The VCP Toolkit is designed for *both* VA staff and community partners to provide direction, strategy, resources and practical tools to strengthen partnerships between VA and community organizations to serve Veterans and their caregivers.

Each section offers information or step-by-step guidance to build and sustain a successful VCP:

- Overview of VCP
- 8 Steps to Form a VCP
- Tips to Build a Strong Foundation
- Potential VCP Activities and Projects
- VHA Resources for VCPs

In addition, the Appendices contain sample communication tools, templates and other valuable resources. It is the hope that your VCP will generate a sustainable network that will enhance the quality of care and services for Veterans and their families as well as enlighten your community about their unique needs.





Overview of VCPs

What is a Partnership?

A partnership is a collaborative working relationship. Partnerships build capacity, leverage resources, address new and emerging needs and build on the experiences and knowledge of each other.

Partnerships are a valuable way for VA and the community to:

1. Advance a shared objective
2. Enhance impact – through education and advocacy – by creating opportunities to share resources and expertise
3. Achieve mutual goals to help improve and expand services
4. Raise awareness, visibility and knowledge about programs and services

What is a VCP?



VCP is a national initiative developed by VHA's Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care (GEC) to assist Veterans' seamless access to, and transitions among, the full continuum of care and support services available in VA and the community.

The VCP model is fully applicable to the entire range of Veteran populations, and can be tailored to address specific issues, populations, topics or programs. A VCP does this by strengthening relationships between VA and local communities and providing support for achieving common goals.

At its core, a VCP is a coalition of VA staff and community partners working together, to support Veterans, their caregivers and families, that recognizes that NO single office, organization or agency owns the expertise and resources to deliver ALL the benefits, services and resources necessary to meet the needs and expectations of every Veteran.

The VCP model of collaboration provides a mechanism to integrate knowledge and action for the combined mutual benefit of all those involved.



Veteran Community Partnerships T O O L K I T

It is a low-tech, high-touch, uniquely Veteran-centric, easily replicated and readily adapted approach to optimizing civilian services on behalf of the men and women who have put their lives on the line for all their fellow Americans.

The goal of VCP is to create a network of support to:

- **Increase choice and awareness** of quality programs and services available for Veterans and their caregivers
- **Educate** participants and the community about services and supports available to Veterans and their caregivers within and beyond VA
- **Promote seamless transitions and coordination of care** for Veterans, regardless of the site or source of delivery
- **Enhance and improve the quality of care** for Veterans

VCP is an evidence-based, proven model focused on local communities.

While the VCP model is a national initiative, each VCP is community-based and functions independently at the local level.

Therefore, **each VCP is unique and reflects the diversity of resources within its community and its VA and is developed and sustained based on its local needs, resources and strengths.**

- VCP is an organized partnership that uses a committee structure with shared leadership. Each VCP is co-chaired by a staff member from the local VAMC and a representative from a community organization.
- VCP includes VA staff and members of community/state/national organizations that share in the vision of supporting Veterans and their caregivers.
- The goals and agenda of each VCP are mutually agreed upon among VA- and non-VA participants.
- Appendix A – **VCP Fact Sheet** provides a one-page overview of Veteran Community Partnerships that can be copied and distributed.
- See the [FY Summary Reports](#) for more on VCP accomplishments.



8 Steps to Form a VCP

The impact and resilience of any partnership depends, to a great extent, on the commitment, experience and involvement of your leadership and its members.

Having a diverse group of partners from the start will ensure your VCP represents the best combination of organizations and people to meet the needs of Veterans in your community.

The following steps can help guide you through forming and developing a VCP.

Your VCP may choose to modify these 8 steps or approach them in a different order to meet the unique needs of your local community/VA facility – you do not have to follow a particular sequence.

The order suggested on the following pages is based on the experience of VCPs that have achieved success and have been able to sustain their efforts.





Step 1 – Build Your Structure

- ✓ Form a planning group
- ✓ Involve facility leadership (VA leadership, VISN POC and leaders in the community)
- ✓ Identify community champions (enthusiastic supporters)
- ✓ Identify VA champions (VA staff that work with community partners)
- ✓ Select Co-Chairs (one community and one VA) who will:
 - Ensure VCP activities are ongoing and maintained
 - Lead the VCPs' mission and vision
 - Report outcomes of their work together

TIPS: The first step in starting a VCP is to find others within the VA who are working with the community and are interested in the goal that can help you in the initial phases.

Facility leadership may be able to provide you with guidance on groups or individuals within the VAMC that have a history of relationships or partnerships with the community.

If you decide to create a Planning Group, the membership should include at least several non-VA representatives from different Veterans' programs and caregiver organizations as well as community providers, agencies and organizations.

Most importantly, **be sure to include Veterans and family caregivers of Veterans.**

Appendices C: ***Sample Email to Prospective Planning Group Members*** and D: ***Potential Community and VA Partners*** may be helpful resources.



Step 2 – Build Your Partnership

- ✓ Establish a committed and passionate group
- ✓ Choose partners wisely:
 - Align with VA internal partners who work with the community
 - Consider community providers with which your VA already has established relationships
 - Identify organizations where people go to find out about Veteran issues or services
 - Include groups that address Veteran needs that may not be traditional Veteran organizations
 - Seek out individuals or groups that represent Veterans and families
 - Strive for depth and diversity (see Appendix D: ***Potential Community and VA Partners***)

TIPS: These questions can assist you in this process:

- Who influences the services Veterans receive in our community (both direct and peripheral involvement)?
- What organizations and key people should we partner with to ensure buy-in and a demographically representative cross-section of our community?
- What other organizations in our community are providing services to Veterans (or, encounter Veterans)?
- What are the biggest barriers to increasing access to Veteran services and who can help break down those barriers?
- What resources will our VCP need to be effective in promoting change?



Step 3 – Establish Regular Meetings

- ✓ Establish a meeting schedule
- ✓ Solicit feedback from partnership members on how often, where, when and how the VCP should meet
- ✓ Encourage consistent attendance and participation
- ✓ Consider rotating meeting venues – with ample space, parking, and accessibility – and the potential benefits of some virtual meetings
- ✓ Get everyone involved

TIPS: Consider holding an informational meeting for potential partners to present the purpose and value of a VCP. This meeting will also allow you to gauge the level of interest in creating a VCP in your community and assist you in identifying potential VCP leaders.

- Plan a place/mode, date and time
- Invite all identified potential partners (see Appendix F: ***Sample Invitation Letter/Email to VCP Informational Meeting***)
- Develop an agenda (see Appendix G: ***Sample Agenda for VCP Information Meeting***) and consider creating a handout (see Appendix H: ***Sample Handout for Informational Meeting***)
- Provide an interest form to be completed during the meeting to assess each attendee's interest in VCP, as well as their areas of expertise, knowledge, and interest in specific projects/ issues that affect Veterans and caregivers (see Appendix I: ***Sample Interest Form for Informational Meeting***)
- Devote plenty of time for relationship building and networking
- Consider using the discussion questions that were used during VISN-wide VCP training (see Appendix K: ***Building Community Partnerships Discussion Questions***)



Step 4 – Assess Community Needs

- ✓ Find out about Veterans in your community
- ✓ Review existing data
- ✓ Consider barriers to access, education and quality – work together to create processes, programs and delivery models to ensure consistent care everywhere Veterans receive care
- ✓ Assess the types of information and programs your partners need to navigate changes in service delivery
- ✓ Look for opportunities to bring on new partners

TIPS: There are multiple ways to begin the community assessment process related to your VCP's area of focus -- many of which are not complicated or expensive:

- Email surveys
- Focus groups
- Data review (local and specific to Veterans – for example, the [VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics](#) is a great resource)

Once your VCP has completed the assessment process, then compile and analyze the responses, draft a report summarizing your conclusions and share the report with members of the VCP.

See Appendices L: ***Sample Letter to Needs Assessment Participants***, M: ***Sample Community Needs Assessment*** and N: ***Sample Needs Assessment Response Tracking Sheet***.



Step 5 – Choose Lane(s) of Effort (if applies)

Choose a strategic focus aligned with at least one lane of effort:

- Expand home and community based services
- Modernize healthy aging
- Increase use of technology
- Increase expertise in geriatrics

TIPS:

- Gain input from all members on the focus and direction of your VCP – **make planning strategic and thoughtful**
- **Start small and build to sustain** – take time during your initial meetings to brainstorm what the VCP can do to enhance a lane of effort
- **Focus on mutual action** – members will likely be aware of the community’s assets as well as unmet needs from their personal and professional experience
- VCP development is enhanced when members agree on goals and measures of success – **seek innovative “grassroots” solutions**
- **Go with the flow of your group** – keep in mind that your group’s focus may change as your VCP grows and matures, and as you learn about and work with your community



Step 6 – Develop Your Action Plan

- ✓ Define expectations
- ✓ Include timetable
- ✓ Assign actions
- ✓ Outline measurable expectations
- ✓ Communicate change
- ✓ Report outcomes and be as specific as possible

Examples of Veteran-centered solutions:

- Improve care of aging Vietnam-era Veterans – moral injury and suicide prevention
- Increase telehealth services

Veteran Community Partnership Action Plan Template					
Date: _____					
Goal: _____					
Objective	Key Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Existing/Needed Resources	Measure of Success	Date of Completion

TIPS: Once your VCP has developed its vision and mission statements, you should set goals and objectives. These, in turn, will inform your action plan.

- A **goal** provides general purpose and direction and describes a desired outcome
- An **objective** provides specific, usually measurable, information reflecting progress toward achieving a goal within a certain timeframe
- A **strategy** is a way of describing how you are going to get things done
- As a final and very important step, organize your goals, objectives, and strategies into an **action plan** (see Appendix O: **Action Plan Template**)



Step 7 – Track Your Success

- ✓ Keep track of membership, meetings (date, # of attendees, topic), # of Veterans reached, new programs/services developed, changes in practice and anecdotes using the **VCP Reporting Tool**
- ✓ Follow the 6 Ds of evaluation:



1. **Describe** goals
2. **Define** important outcomes
3. **Develop** measures
4. **Design** a measurement plan
5. **Do!**
6. **Document** and share results

TIPS: In addition to tracking success, your VCP will also want to:

- **Communicate success:**

- ✓ Deliver key messages about the purpose and accomplishments of your VCP – use the power of storytelling
- ✓ Describe improvements in Veteran and caregiver experience
- ✓ Provide details about progress on focus area/lane of effort
- ✓ Highlight changes in practice influenced by VCP participation or a VCP event or activity

- **Celebrate success:**

- ✓ Plan celebrations with your VCP after major events or activities to acknowledge the efforts of members and the successes achieved – this helps build relationships among partners, generate team spirit and motivate members to plan future events and activities
- ✓ Celebrations also serve to remind members why you are doing this work and reinforce the ongoing needs of Veterans and caregivers

Step 8 – Focus on Relationships

- Take time to enjoy new (or established) friends and let the process of developing your VCP unfold from the expertise and creativity among all members
- Be careful *not* to become so project-driven that you lose sight of why it is that you came together in the first place
- The best guarantee for success with VCP development is to focus on the relationships among members – **meaningful relationships most always provide the best results**

Outreach =



Collaboration =



TIP: The [Community Tool-Box Center](#) is a global resource for free information on essential skills for building healthy communities.

The Community Tool-Box Center's mission is promoting community health and development by connecting people, ideas and resources.

VCPs have benefitted from the many valuable resources and tools.





NOTES on Steps to Form a VCP:

Step 1: Build Your Structure

Step 2: Build Your Partnership

Step 3: Establish Regular Meetings

Step 4: Assess Community Needs

Step 5: Choose a Lane of Effort

Step 6: Develop Your Action Plan

Step 7: Track Your Success

Step 8: Focus on Relationships



Tips for Building a Strong Foundation

Each VCP will be unique and will develop in ways that depend on many different factors, including the community in which you work and the leaders who take on various tasks of your VCP. In this section, you will be provided suggestions for how your VCP may grow and develop most effectively.

Building a strong and sustainable foundation begins with creating healthy relationships – each member respecting other members, listening to others' opinions and making a commitment to work with one another.

Other tips for building a strong foundation include:

- **First and foremost, be inclusive**

Invite agencies, providers, organizations and champions who value and care for Veterans and their families to become involved.

- **Recognize the goals of potential partners and encourage every partner to establish common ground within the partnership**

Know that some partners may come to the table looking for ways that VCP will benefit their mission and vision. Therefore, encourage each partner to think about how VCP will help them reach their desired goals, and identify VCP as a benefit.

- **Identify and resolve any potential “turf” issues**

Some partners may have differing interests, and this could create tension within your group. Refer to the mission to maintain focus. Work toward developing a strong unified voice from your members – this will be essential to your success.

- **Achieve consensus on goals and outcomes from the beginning of your VCP development**

Develop a process to reach consensus. Be clear and in agreement about vision, mission and goals of your VCP. Take time for members to discuss the goals and outcomes and reach consensus.



■ **Be patient**

Each member needs to be educated about the mission, options and services of other members. Respect the expertise and points of view of all partners. Starting the VCP is the most time-consuming part of the process. Once the VCP is formed, it will nurture and sustain itself with much less resources and time needed from the initial VA partners.

■ **Communicate VA's boundaries and learn about partners' boundaries**

VA has policies, rules, and regulations about endorsements, accepting gifts, protecting patient privacy, ethical considerations, etc. Explain to organizations and individuals in the VCP the boundaries that will apply.

■ **Invite Veterans, their families and their caregivers in your community to tell their stories at VCP meetings**

This can serve to remind members why you are doing this work and highlight the specific needs of Veterans, their families and their caregivers in your community.

■ **Build trust**

One of the most important things that any partnership must do is to build trust among its members and, subsequently, its respective community. This needs to be your main goal above and beyond any projects or activities.





Potential VCP Activities and Projects

Here are suggestions for your VCP projects and activities. This is not an exhaustive list. Engage your members to creatively develop, adapt and customize your projects and activities according to the unique needs of Veterans and their caregivers within your community. Select one or more to start that are feasible and will accomplish your goals.

Share Information at VCP Meetings

- Plan time each meeting (or on a regular basis) for representatives from member organizations to share information about their services for Veterans.
- Hold a 'resource sharing' event for staff from VA and community organizations to showcase the information each has available for Veterans and their families.
- Create and share a list of community and VA contacts along with their related areas of expertise.

Veteran Outreach

- Plan educational programs for the community to raise awareness about Veteran needs as identified by VCP members.
- Distribute printed materials with information on VCP and the unique needs of Veterans and their caregivers.
- Convene town hall meetings to engage the community and provide awareness, support and information. Provide presentations and educational events for VA and non-VA organizations about local services and supports.
- Hold Veteran-focused outreach events to educate Veterans about benefits and services and to help them enroll.
- Participate in Veteran stand-downs.



Veteran Community Partnerships T O O L K I T

Education

- Use VCP [training videos](#) to educate the community about VA, VA benefits, military culture and suicide prevention.
- Develop a list of speakers who can educate VA staff and volunteers about community partners and services and educate community partners and Veteran organizations about VA services and benefits.
- Use the free online courses available through [PsychArmor Institute](#) to provide education to your partners and community about the unique needs of Veterans. (See *15 Things Veterans Want You to Know* course – and others.)
- Distribute information about your VCP at local, state and regional education conferences.



Communication

- Create a communication portal (i.e., email group list or other venue) through which VCP members can easily communicate with each other about issues/questions concerning Veterans and their families.
- Develop a website to showcase your VCP membership and activities.
- Adapt the flyer and brochure templates provided by the national VCP program to provide more specific information about your VCP.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Create and distribute a community needs assessment to identify Veteran needs that the VCP can address. (See Appendix M – ***Sample Community Needs Assessment***.)
- Use the VCP Reporting Tool to track your efforts and to gain specific feedback about the effectiveness of your VCP.



Member Recruitment

- Identify potential VCP members and conduct a campaign for recruitment.
- Announce new projects to the local community and request volunteers to participate in the efforts.
- Include information about joining or becoming involved with your VCP in all outreach activities. Invite those with a passion for serving Veterans to attend a VCP meeting.
- Develop a postcard that individuals can fill out with their information if they desire to join.

Legal/Regulatory Issues

- Identify and address any legal, regulatory and/or policy barriers that exist between the community and VA. If you have questions that your local resources cannot answer, feel free to contact the [VHA National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships](#) to discuss any issues you have identified.

Donations

- Work with VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement on donation efforts.
- Identify potential sources of funding/donations to facilitate VCP activities.
- Write proposals or grants for conferences and events.
- Explore state and local funding sources for specific projects.
- Partner with other organizations to share projects and costs.
- Work with the VAMC Director or Chief of Staff's office to ensure compliance with VA rules and regulations.



www.va.gov/resources

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources

www.va.gov/find-locations

www.caregiver.va.gov



VHA Resources for VCPs

VA Policy Questions?

At your local VAMC, look to your Director, Public Affairs Officer, Center for Development and Civic Engagement Chief and/or legal counsel for guidance on policy surrounding community partnerships. If you have questions or concerns about VA policies related to partnerships, such as:

- What due diligence to conduct before developing partnerships
- Whether a Memorandum of Understanding is needed/how to structure one
- Sharing of space and/or resources
- Endorsement policy, use of VA and partner logos

please contact VHA's [National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships](#).

VA Caregiver Online Support



VA's Caregiver Support Program offers information, stories and resources for family caregivers at www.caregiver.va.gov. They offer resources for caregivers, such as a Peer Mentoring Program, a [Caregiver Dementia Video Series](#) and a [VA Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers](#).

VA Long Term Services and Supports

VA provides a wide range of services that can help Veterans remain as independent as possible when facing ongoing challenges with everyday tasks. Many services are provided at home, and may also be provided at community sites, or in residential settings, or nursing homes.

Services are provided based on clinical need for services (not all services are available in all locations) For more information, visit www.va.gov/geriatrics.



VA Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

VA has a variety of mental health resources, information, treatment options, and more — all accessible to Veterans, Veterans' supporters, and the public.



For example, the [VA App Store](#) lists dozens of apps, including those created specifically for Veterans and their health care providers.

VA provides support for a variety of mental health conditions and other challenges, such as:

[Anxiety](#)

[Bipolar](#)

[Depression](#)

[Effects of TBI](#)

[Military Sexual Trauma](#)

[PTSD](#)

[Schizophrenia](#)

[Substance Use](#)

[Suicide Prevention](#)

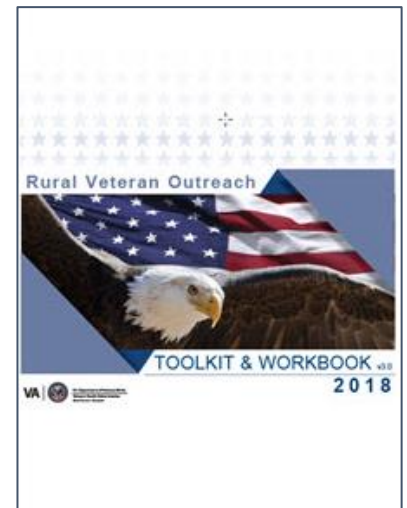
[Tobacco](#)

VCPs may be particularly interested in [VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#).

VA Rural Health

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) implements a diverse range of programs that help improve the health and well-being of rural Veterans by increasing their access to care and services. The national programs stem from the Office's model to "research, innovate and disseminate" new innovations to support the 2.7 million rural Veterans who are enrolled in and rely on the VA health care system.

To learn more about the needs of rural Veterans, watch the 3.5-minute award winning video, [Caring for Rural Veterans](#).



VCPs may find that the [Rural Veteran Outreach Toolkit](#) is especially helpful.



Appendices

These *VCP Toolkit* appendices are available as WORD documents, which you can edit to meet your specific needs, OR they are available as PDFs that can be accessed at www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/vcp.asp:

Appendix A: ***VCP Fact Sheet***

Appendix B: ***VCP Organizational Chart***

Appendix C: ***Sample Email to Prospective Planning Group Members***

Appendix D: ***Potential Community and VA Partners***

Appendix E: ***How to Create a Group Contact Email***

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Appendix N: ***Sample Needs Assessment Response Tracking Sheet***

Appendix O: ***Action Plan Template***

Appendix P: ***Event Planning Guide***

Appendix Q: ***Event Planning Checklist***

Appendix R: ***Sample Participant Feedback Form***

Appendix S: ***Sample Resource Guide Feedback Questionnaire***

Appendix T: ***Certificate of Commitment Template***



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Appendix A: **VCP Fact Sheet**

NOTES: Download at www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/vcp.asp. You can adapt this fact sheet for your specific VCP and provide your relevant contact info.



Veteran Community Partnership (VCP) Program FACT SHEET

Why VCP?

The passage of the MISSION Act established an imperative for VHA to engage and build relationships with community partners. Veteran Community Partnerships (VCPs) augment the programs and services available through VA by expanding collaborative efforts in the community.

About two thirds of Veterans are not enrolled in VA and only access community resources for their health care needs; those who do receive VA health services also access non-VA services. VA and non-VA providers and agencies must establish and nurture partnerships to create a comprehensive system of support for Veterans, families and caregivers. VCP provides a mechanism to integrate knowledge and action for the combined mutual benefit of all involved.

What is a VCP?

VCPs are organized partnerships that bring together VA staff and community organizations to build relationships, exchange information, educate each other and the public on resources available to Veterans and collaborate to reduce barriers that impede Veterans' access to care or services. These coalitions improve Veteran choice, quality, services and access for Veterans, their families and caregivers. VCPs promote seamless care transitions while strengthening VA and community relationships.

What does a VCP look like?

VCPs are unique according to the diverse needs and resources within their communities. They are developed and sustained based on local resources and strengths. Leadership is shared between the VA and community partners to facilitate involvement of all partners.

What activities do VCPs do?

VCPs exchange information, provide outreach and education events, conduct needs assessments, develop action plans, create tools, share resources, report outcomes and more.

Who should be involved in a VCP?

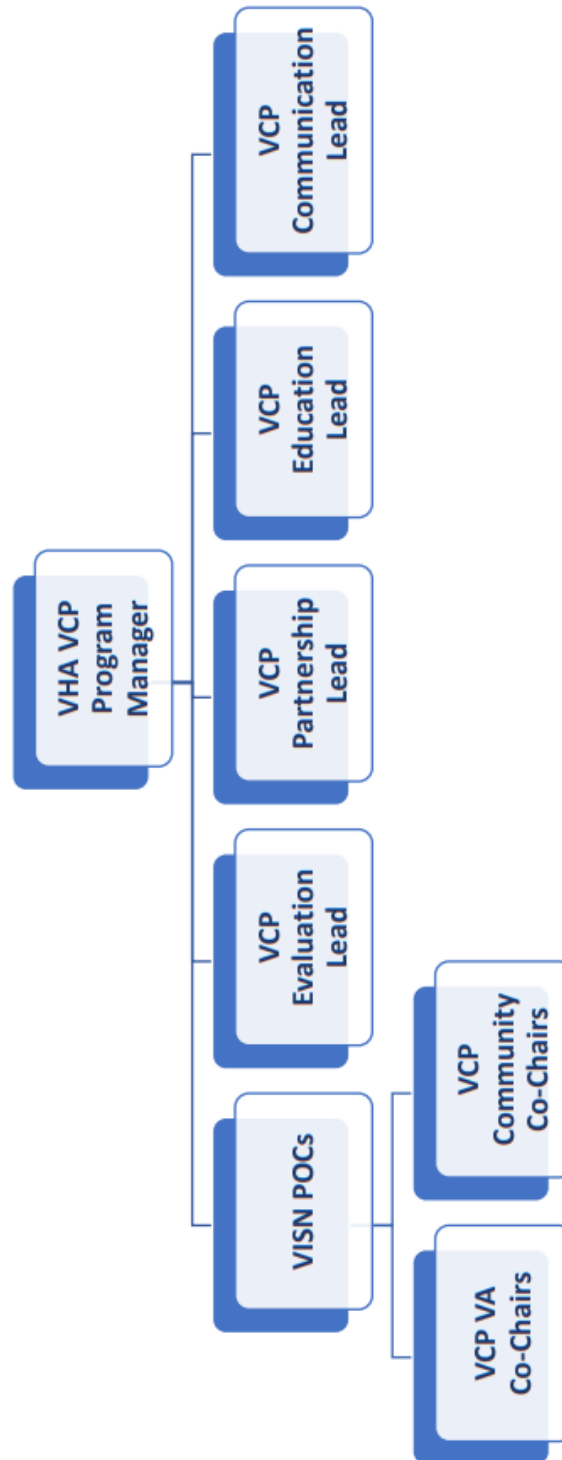
VCP staff members who recognize the need for community involvement to improve access to care and services for Veterans and work with community partners as part of their regular duties make ideal VCP members. This may include, but is not limited to, social workers, nurses, chaplains, outreach coordinators, staff from Public Affairs, Community Care, Vet Centers and more.

VCP Community partners are representatives from local or state for- or non-profit agencies or organizations and individuals who support the Veteran and military community and want to work with the VA and Veterans to assist. Ideal community partners include, but are not limited to: Veteran Service Officers, health and human services agencies, aging agencies, hospice agencies, home health agencies, hospitals and clinics, mental health agencies, food banks, funeral homes, homeless shelters, Veterans, family members or caregivers, colleges and universities, transportation services and more.

www.va.gov/healthpartnerships



Appendix B: **VCP Organizational Chart**



NOTE: POC = Point of Contact



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Appendix C: *Sample Email to Prospective Planning Group Members*



Hi **[name]**,

I wanted to let you know about a new program that our local VA is embarking on called **Veteran-Community Partnerships (VCP)**. The goal of this partnership initiative is to foster seamless VA/community transitions for the full continuum of care and services for our Veterans and their caregivers.

As you are aware, many Veterans are not enrolled in the VA and instead receive support and services from community providers. Most Veterans enrolled in VA also access health services from the local community. Therefore, involvement and partnerships with other agencies is essential to VA's mission of supporting Veterans, because coordination of services is essential for quality care.

VCP intends to build on community resources and strengths, while facilitating collaboration and integration of knowledge to benefit all those involved. In addition, we hope this will become a sustainable vehicle for disseminating information and creating the ability to identify long-term changes in local services and best practices. VCP also works to identify gaps and changes in services for Veterans.

Currently, I am putting together a committee to guide our local VCP. I would be grateful if you, or someone from **[list organization]**, would participate on this committee, as we feel strongly that your input into the early development of our local VCP will be essential.

Please let me know a convenient time that I may call you and discuss this further. You can reach me via email [\[your_email@va.gov\]](mailto:your_email@va.gov) or by phone **[555-555-5555]**. Thank you for your interest and I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[Your signature]



Appendix D: *Potential Community and VA Partners*

Community Partners

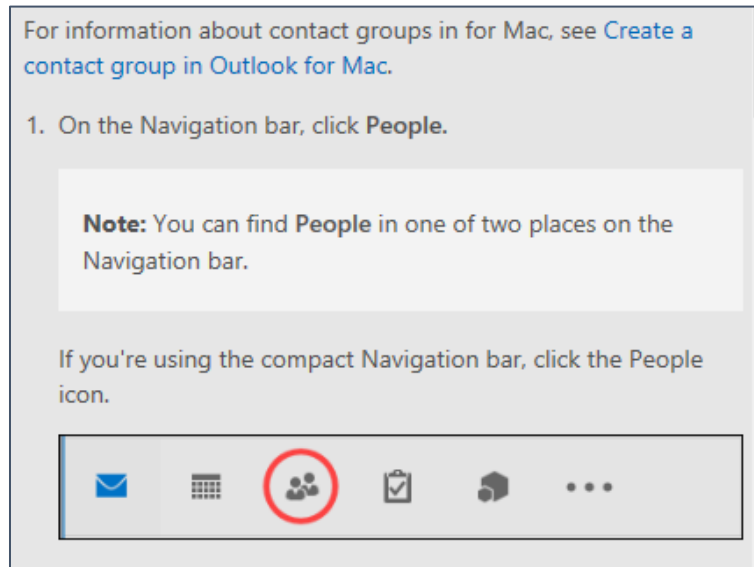
- Academic institutions
- Aging networks
- Caregivers and caregiver coalitions
- Community, county and state agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Home care agencies
- Hospice organizations and hospice-Veteran partnerships
- National Guard
- Non-profits and charitable organizations
- Police
- Respite organizations
- Service organizations
- Transportation services
- Veterans and Veteran organizations
- And more

VA Partners

- Caregiver Support
- Center for Development and Civic Engagement
- Chaplain Service
- Community Care
- Homelessness
- Hospice/Palliative Care
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Mental Health/Suicide Prevention
- Nursing/Community Health
- Police
- Primary Care
- Public Affairs/Outreach
- Recreation Therapy
- Social Work
- Special Emphasis Programs
- Vet Centers (readjustment)
- VBA/VCA
- Veterans Justice Outreach
- Whole Health
- Women's Health
- And more

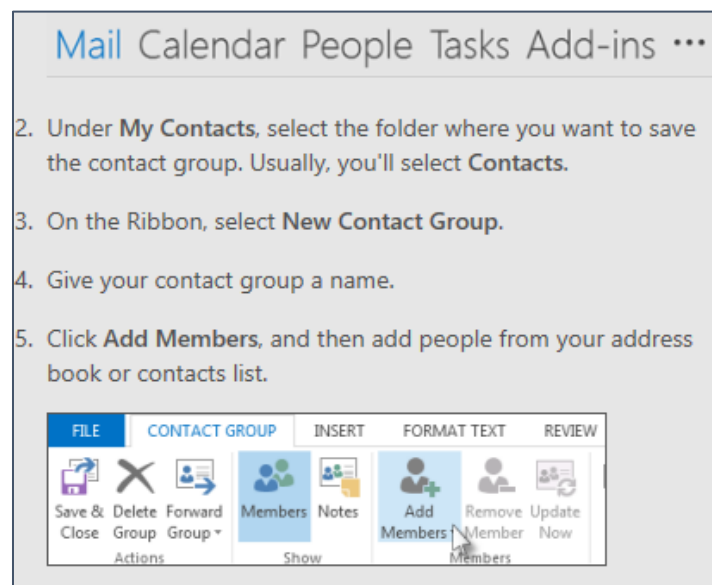
Appendix E: *How to Create a Group Email List within Outlook*

Step 1: Go into Outlook and **click on People**.



Step 2: Go under My Contacts and **click on Contacts-yourname@va.gov.** and then on the top navigation bar **click on New Contact Group**.

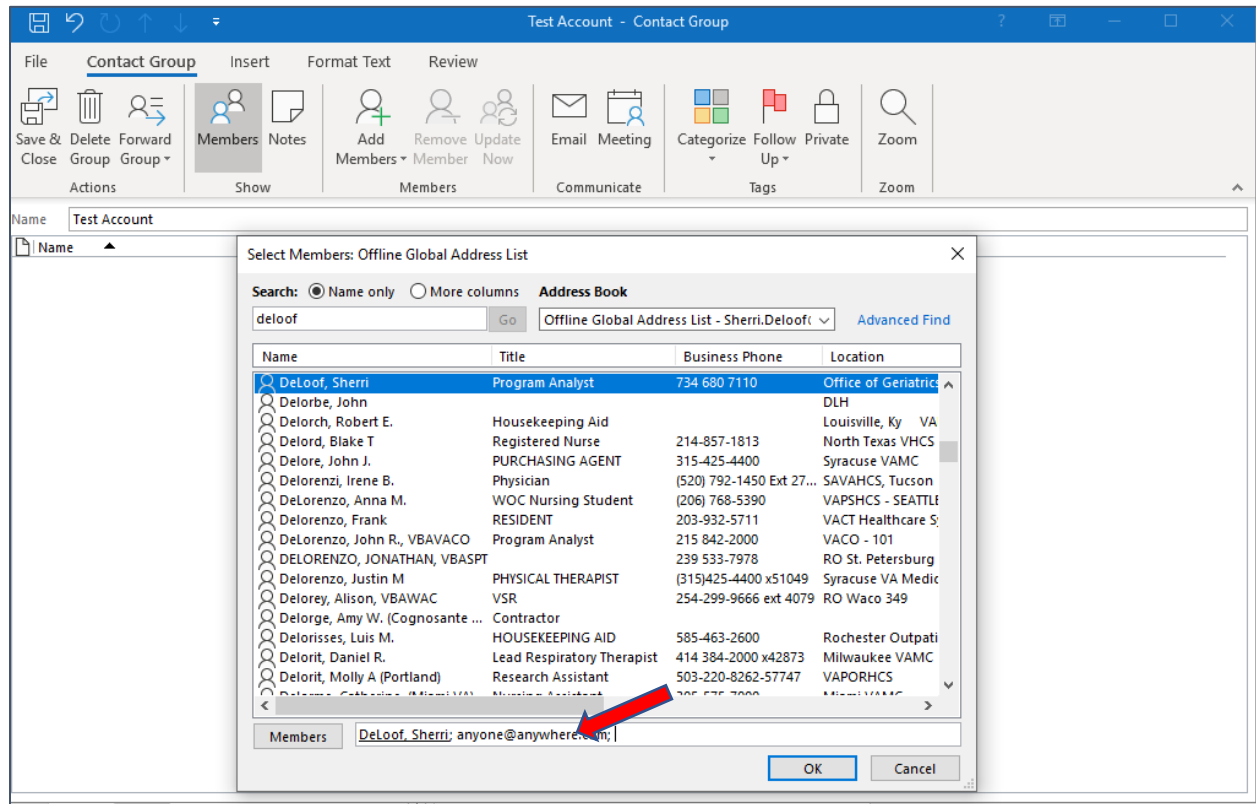
Once you have a Contact Group open, enter in the Name of your Contact Group. Then, return to the top navigation bar and **click on Add Members**, from Address Book.





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Step 3: First add in the VA members you wish to add to you group using the Global Address List (GAL). Then, manually add non-VA email addresses in the Members box. Once everyone is added **click OK**.



Your Group Email List is created.

NOTE: This contact is only accessible to you and will not be found in the GAL. However, once you send an email to your new group, others can save the email you sent and copy and paste the email recipients into a new email.



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Appendix F: *Sample Invitation Letter/Email to VCP Informational Meeting*



Dear **[Name]**:

On behalf of (your organization), I would like to invite you to join us for an informational meeting to explore the possibility of developing a Veteran-Community Partnership (VCP) in our area. The focus of VCP is to create seamless access to and transitions among the full continuum of extended care and support services in VA and the community.

By establishing a VCP in our area, we believe our partnership will be able to:

- **Increase choice and awareness** to the best quality care and services available to Veterans and their caregivers
- **Educate one another in the community** about services and supports available to Veterans and their caregivers
- **Strengthen relationships** among VA and local community partners, providing support for shared goals on behalf of Veterans

The VCP we form will become part of a national network of VCPs established through the Department of Veterans Affairs and national/state/local agencies.

The informational meeting will be held at [time] on [day and date] at [location].

If you are unable to attend this meeting, we would appreciate your forwarding this letter to a colleague who might be willing to represent your organization.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by phone or email. Thank you for your interest and I look forward to connecting with you soon.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Phone]

[Email]

Attachment: ***VCP Fact Sheet***



Appendix G: ***Sample VCP Informational Meeting Agenda***



VCP Informational Meeting Agenda

[Location]

[Date and Time]

[Use agenda items below that are relevant and appropriate for your meeting and provide a time frame for each topic to keep meeting on track.]

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Objectives of the meeting
- Purpose of a VCP
- Components of a VCP
- Structure and leadership
- Importance of Veteran caregivers
- Questions and answers
- Interest forms to facilitators
- Next steps and closure
 - Meeting schedule

Handouts: ***VCP Fact Sheet, VCP Vision/Mission, Interest Form***



Appendix H: *Sample Handout for Informational Meeting*



Vision: [insert your VCP's vision statement]

Example: All Veterans and their caregivers will have access to, and choices among, the services that allow our Veterans to stay in the places they call home.

Mission: [insert your VCP's mission statement]

Example: To foster Veterans' seamless access to, and transitions among, the full continuum of non-institutional extended care and support services in VA and the community.

Meeting Objectives:

1. To describe the purpose and value of a VCP
2. To assess the level of interest in a VCP among meeting attendees
3. To identify which areas meeting attendees would like to work on/pursue in collaboration

Goals:

1. **Increase choice and awareness** of the best quality care and services available to Veterans and their caregivers
2. **Educate** one another and the community about services and supports available to Veterans and their caregivers
3. **Strengthen relationships** with VA and local communities and provide support for common goals

Components of a VCP:

- Leadership
- (Potential) Project Workgroups
- Community Outreach
- Legal/Regulatory Issues
- Education
- Research and Evaluation
- Member Recruitment
- Resources Development



Appendix I: *Sample Interest Form for VCP Members*



Interest Form

Please complete this form and return to **[name, contact info]**.

1. Name: _____ Organization: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

2. Please check all that apply. I am a:

- ☐ Service Provider
- ☐ Veteran
- ☐ Caregiver
- ☐ Other _____

3. Please check 'yes' or 'no' for the following statements.

I have experience working with Veterans.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

I would like to serve on the VCP Leadership Committee.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Please check the workgroups/topics that you are interested in:

- ☐ Community Outreach
- ☐ Legal/Regulatory Issues
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Research and Evaluation
- ☐ Member Recruitment
- ☐ Resource Development
- ☐ Other _____



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5. Please identify the dates and times that *are the best* for future meetings.

Time ↓/ Day →	M	T	W	Th	F
8-10 am					
10-12 noon					
12-2 pm					
2-4 pm					
4-6 pm					
After 6 pm					

6. What resources are you or your organization able to provide for VCP?

- ☐ Meeting space
- ☐ Event space
- ☐ Financial donations
- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Mailing lists
- ☐ Contact hour provider (CEUs)
- ☐ AV equipment
- ☐ Other _____

7. What other groups/organizations do you recommend joining the VCP?

8. What are some of your personal experiences or expertise that you think may be beneficial to VCP?

9. Comments or suggestions:



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Appendix J: *Sample Agreement to Serve on the VCP Leadership Committee*



Dear **[Name]**:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Leadership Committee of the newly forming Veteran-Community Partnership (VCP). The purpose of the VCP is to:

1. **Increase choice and awareness** regarding the best quality care and services available to Veterans and their caregivers,
2. **Educate** one another and the community regarding services and supports available to Veterans and their caregivers, and
3. **Strengthen relationships** with VA and local communities and provide support for common goals.

As a member of the Leadership Committee your role will include providing leadership to and governing of the VCP.

Please complete the information below with your contact information and add your signature to agree to serve on the Leadership Committee.

Name:

Organization:

Address:

E-mail:


Phone:

Fax:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your support!

Appendix K: ***Building Community Partnerships Discussion Questions***



Building Community Partnerships Discussion Questions

A. From your personal or professional life, describe the most exceptional community partnership that you have ever been a part of. **In one word, what made it exceptional? What was the impact on you?**

B. As you reflect on these exemplary partnerships/collaborations, **what can we learn, adopt, adapt or emulate in creating this Veteran Community Partnership (VCP)?**

C. Imagine all the possibilities that new and enhanced partnerships can address in improving care for Veterans and their families. **What are the three most compelling opportunities to improve access to care and services for Veterans through this VCP? Think BIG...**

Reminder – 4 Lanes of Effort:

- Expand home and community-based services
- Modernize healthy aging
- Increase use of technology
- Increase expertise in geriatrics



Appendix L: *Sample Letter to Needs Assessment Participants*



Dear **[Name]**:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Veteran Community Partnerships (VCP), a partnership of community organizations and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) personnel dedicated to improving Veterans' access to and choices for their health care needs and services.

As part of our efforts, we are trying to learn more about how community organizations and VA facilities work together in our area. We would like to request that you complete the attached needs assessment.

If you choose to participate, please return the assessment to **[name & contact info]** by **[date]**. Your participation is voluntary, and your answers will be confidential.

If you have any questions about the assessment or want to learn more about VCP, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your interest and support and we hope you will participate in our survey.

Sincerely,

Attachment: ***Community Needs Assessment***



Appendix M: *Sample Community Needs Assessment*



Community Needs Assessment

The following needs assessment is part of a national effort to learn more about the existing relationships between VA facilities and your organization and to determine how best a Veteran-Community Partnerships (VCP) initiative might serve our community.

Your participation is voluntary, and your answers will be confidential. After completing the survey, please return to: **[Name], [email], [fax].**

1. What population does your organization serve?
2. Are there certain eligibility requirements (e.g., area, income) for your services? If so, what are they?
3. Do you ask every client/patient/consumer what his or her Veteran/military status is?
☐ Yes
☐ No
4. Do you receive referrals from VA facilities?
☐ Yes
☐ No
5. If the answer to question # 4 is yes, how many Veterans referred from VA facilities did you serve in the last calendar year? (Estimates are fine if you do not track this.)

_____ Number referred

_____ Number served

_____ We do not track referrals from VA facilities

6. How is your organization paid for services it provides to Veterans referred to them by VA providers? Please indicate any of the payers listed below that your organization receives reimbursement from.

☐ Medicare

☐ Medicaid

☐ TRICARE/Champus

☐ HMO

☐ Private Insurances

☐ Private pay

☐ Per Diem arrangement

☐ Charity Organization

☐ Other (list)



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7. What are some barriers to partnering with VA organizations that you have experienced?

- ☐ We have no knowledge about VA policies and regulations.
- ☐ We have no knowledge of how to contact VA facilities.
- ☐ We lack the knowledge about VA benefits, services, and programs.
- ☐ There is a lack of knowledge regarding certain needs that may be more common in the Veteran population (PTSD, combat history, exposure to chemical weapons etc.)
- ☐ VA staff does not have knowledge of our programs/services.
- ☐ VA does not have knowledge of non-VA benefits (Medicaid, Medicare, OAA programs, etc.)

8. Do you target outreach activities toward Veterans?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please check the following outreach activities your agency has completed with VA providers in the past year.

- ☐ Veteran education and training
- ☐ Veteran family support groups
- ☐ Veteran targeted publications
- ☐ Outreach to VSOs
- ☐ Media use
- ☐ Other (list)_____

9. What are the most difficult and challenging issues in referring and coordinating care for Veterans?

10. What has worked in referring and coordinating care for Veterans?

11. In your opinion, what specific resources would be helpful to you in providing quality care for Veterans in your area?



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12. Would your organization be interested in joining the Veteran-Community Partnerships initiative to improve access, and choice for Veterans and their caregivers?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, who would be interested in representing your organization?

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Name and role of individual completing this form: _____

Organization name and address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Thank you for completing this assessment and for your support with our national effort to improve care, access, and choice for our Veterans!




Appendix N: ***Sample Needs Assessment Response Tracking Sheet***

Categories listed on the [Response Tracking Spreadsheet](#) are:

- Is Veteran status asked
- Referrals from VA
- # of Veterans referred in a year
- # of Veterans served
- Track Veteran referrals from VA
- How is your agency paid for services it provides to Veterans, Medicare
- Barriers to partnering with the VA
- Provide outreach to Veterans
- List type of outreach
- Challenges with referring and care coordination
- What works
- Resources that would help your agency provide quality care to Veterans
- Organization
- POC
- Email
- Phone
- Interest in joining VCP
- List anyone else from agency interested in joining VCP



Appendix O: *Action Plan Template*

<div>Veteran Community Partnership Action Plan Template Date: _____ Goal: _____</div>						
Objective	Key Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Existing/Needed Resources	Measure of Success	Date of Completion	



Appendix P: ***Event Planning Guide***

The following is a detailed 10-step guide that will help your Veteran Community Partnership (VCP) to plan and organize a successful event. It is intended to be used with Appendix R: ***Event Planning Checklist***, which can be revised according to your planning process by deleting our examples and typing in your own information.

Here are some suggestions and strategies to review before you begin to plan the details of your event:

1. **Create a vision of success** – Have everyone in your VCP commit to the idea of a successful community event and making it happen! Brainstorm together:
 - What would a successful event look like?
 - What audiences in the community would you like to reach?
 - What will the audience gain by attending the event?
 - What will your organization or coalition gain by sponsoring the event?
2. **Develop goals and objectives** – Take the time and energy to do this to help establish a clear direction to plan and evaluate your event. Goals state *what* will happen because of the event.
 - Example: (List workplace, faith community or other target audience) will have an increased awareness about the need to improve quality of care for Veterans and their loved ones.Objectives state *how and when* the event will happen. Include the specific topic(s) to be addressed, target audience, measurable outcome(s) and timeframe.
 - Example: (VCP) will conduct (list specific number here) Veteran-centric seminars by (list date).
3. **Distribute the workload** – Form a planning committee and assign tasks (based on your goals and objectives) among everyone participating in your VCP. Set regular meeting dates to keep everyone on track.
4. **Start planning in advance** – Allow plenty of time to attend to all the details of planning and promotion. Use the ***Event Planning Checklist*** to develop an action plan for documenting tasks, person/s responsible and deadline dates.

NOTE: Great speakers often book fast, so contact potential speakers early.



5. Identify existing resources for donations –

- Make a list of resources that each *internal* member of the organization or coalition will contribute – for example, printing, AV equipment, etc.
- Make a list of established *external* contacts in the community to ask for donations to support your event – for example, space, food, publicity, media coverage, etc.
- Work with [VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement](#) on donation efforts.

6. Plan the details –

- **Budget** – Make a list of items that require funding support – include in-kind support, monetary donations and other donations.
- **Location** – Ensure topics are enhanced by the location you choose. If the topic you choose is of interest to your audience, but the location is unfamiliar or difficult to access, people are less likely to attend. Also, keep in mind that the location you choose can also communicate an affiliation with a group or belief system.
- **Speakers** – If you are looking for speakers outside your VCP membership, start with identifying existing relationships – you may be surprised by the speakers you have access to. Be sure to thoroughly brief all speakers about your goals, objectives, audiences and key messages.
- **Program agenda** – Remember to allow time for the audience to participate in the event and to socialize with one another and members of your organization or coalition. This can lead to meaningful conversations that can leave a lasting impression. Also, prepare:
 - Written instructions for facilitators, moderators or greeters
 - Sign-in sheets for participants (for in-person events, if appropriate)
- **Refreshments** – Include some type of food and beverage (you can't go wrong with options, healthy choices and water) that your audience would enjoy (and that you can get donated for free, if possible).
- **Participant handouts** – Collate a participant information packet to distribute at in-person events that may include:
 - Handouts of or related to presentations
 - Information about your VCP, with contact information
 - Other relevant materials related to your topic
 - Information about upcoming relevant community events
 - Other free giveaways



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7. **Promote and publicize** – Invest in one well-done promotional flyer for the event that can be used for mailings, posters, social media, etc. (See samples on the [VCP Website](#).) Other ideas include:
 - Focus marketing efforts to targeted groups, not individuals – you get more “bang for your buck.”
 - Hold every member of your VCP accountable for marketing to specific groups of people – for example, ask each member to bring three people to the event.
 - Faith community bulletins/communications, supermarkets, Little League games, community bulletin boards, book clubs, libraries, hair salons/barbershops, food banks, thrift stores, social media platforms and more are all potential distribution channels for your materials.
 - Use connections with professional or academic venues:
 - Offer continuing education through an approved school or agency
 - Connect with local professional associations
 - Go to the teachers in local schools – law, medicine, high school, nursing, community colleges, legal assistant, theological seminaries – and encourage them to bring their class to the event
8. **Evaluate your outcomes** – Use Appendix R: ***Sample Participant Feedback Form*** to evaluate your events. Other suggestions include:
 - Have a suggestion or comment box available – it is a great way to ensure that participants have an opportunity to give anonymous feedback.
 - If a participant shares a personal story, ask if you could write it up or share it anonymously at future events or in your materials. Personal stories about the need to improve care and services often have the greatest impact.
9. **Follow-up** – Collect participant names and contact information on a sign-in sheet at your event. People who attend have demonstrated an interest in your cause so find ways to keep them involved! You can also use your list to promote future events. In addition, write a story for your organizational or VCP newsletter, website or social media platform(s) summarizing the event. Each quarter, enter data about your event in the VCP Reporting Tool.
10. **Celebrate!** – Plan a celebration with your VCP after completing your event to acknowledge the successes achieved. This will serve to build team spirit and motivate your group to plan future events.



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Appendix Q: *Event Planning Checklist*

VCP Event Task Assignments	Timeline	6 months	5 months	4 months	3 months	2 months	1 month	4 weeks	3 weeks	2 weeks	1 week	Day before	Day of	Person/s Responsible
Select focus of VCP event	3-6 months													
Identify target audience/s to promote event	3-6 months													
Contact potential sponsors	3-6 months													
Contact outside continuing education providers	3-6 months													
Draft budget	3-6 months													
Select dates/reserve rooms	3-6 months													
Contact & confirm speakers	3-6 months													
Flyer/Poster copied or printed	3-4 months													
Contact refreshment venues	3-4 months													
Obtain outside mailing lists and other marketing	3-4 months													
Recruit volunteers to assist with publicity	2-4 months													
Distribute flyers/posters	2 months													
Mail speaker packets w/ brochure	2 months													
Set up registration database	2 months													
Finalize refreshments	2 months													
Recruit volunteers to assist with event, if needed	2 months													
Send confirmations to participants with map	1 month, ongoing													
Rent tables, chairs and other items, if needed	1 month													
Draft room layout	1 month													
Draft detailed agenda	1 month													
Make signs	1 month													
Finalize volunteer schedule	1 month													
Review AV needs, order equipment	3-4 weeks													
Print handouts, final program, participant feedback/evaluation forms	2-3 weeks													
Confirm final count for refreshments	1 week													
Put together folders	1 week													
Print badges	1 week													
Print CEU certificates	1 week													
Print rosters	1 day													
Set up conference rooms	1 day													
Put up signs, set up registration, etc.	1 day													



Appendix R: *Sample Participant Feedback Form*



Participant Feedback Form

[Insert name of your group and/or the event]

[date of event]

1. What was your **main** reason for attending this event? *(Check all that apply)*
 - ☐ I am a Veteran and want to learn more about accessing health care
 - ☐ I am a caregiver of a Veteran and want to learn more about caregiver issues
 - ☐ I am a health care professional and want to learn more about how to better care for Veterans and their families
 - ☐ I thought it sounded interesting
 - ☐ I was invited by a friend, family member or colleague
 - ☐ Other: _____
2. What was your overall impression of the information provided? *(Check the statement that best applies)*
 - ☐ I learned many new things that will be useful to me
 - ☐ I learned a few new things that will be useful to me
 - ☐ I learned new things, but nothing of use to me
 - ☐ I did not learn anything new, but it was a good review
 - ☐ I did not learn anything new
 - ☐ Other: _____
3. After attending this event, which of the following are you likely to do within the next month or two? *(Check all that apply)*
 - ☐ More thinking and/or reading about this topic
 - ☐ Talk with family members and/or close friends about this topic
 - ☐ Talk with my doctor about this topic
 - ☐ Talk with someone in my faith community about this topic
 - ☐ Get involved in efforts to improve care for Veterans and their families
 - ☐ Join a Veteran-Community Partnership
 - ☐ Other: _____
4. Are there things you expected or hoped to hear about that did *not* come up in the discussion? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, what were they?
5. Please provide some demographic information:
 - ☐ Veteran ☐ Caregiver ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other Gender Identity
 - ☐ 35 or younger ☐ 36-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ 66+

Comments: _____



Appendix S: *Sample Resource Guide Feedback Questionnaire*



VCP Resource Guide Questionnaire

Thank you for using the *VCP Resource Guide*. To help us improve your experience, please answer the questions below:

1. I am a: (check all that apply)

☐ Veteran

1a. If yes, are you 65 or older?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1b. Are you service connected?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1c. Do you receive VA benefits (VA Pension, VA Compensation, or Aid and Attendance)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1d. Are you enrolled in VA health care?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1de. Do you consider yourself to live in a rural community?

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Family member

☐ Caregiver

☐ Community agency/organization staff member

☐ VA staff member

☐ Other (please describe your role) _____

2. Where did you get the *VCP Resource Guide* from?

☐ Website

☐ Community event

☐ Health care provider

☐ Other (please describe) _____

3. What resource(s) were you looking for? _____

4. Were you able to find what you were looking for in the *Guide*?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Did you contact this resource/these resources?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. How often have you used the *VCP Resource Guide*?

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ At least once a month

☐ Less than once a month

☐ Not at all as I just got it

7. How helpful was the *VCP Resource Guide* to you? (circle a number)

1

2

3

4

5



Not helpful at all

Extremely helpful

8. If you could update or change the *Guide*, what would you suggest?

Thank you for your feedback. Please return this questionnaire to:

Appendix T: *Certificate of Commitment Template*

 		<p>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs</p> <p>VETERAN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS</p>
<h1>CERTIFICATE OF COMMITMENT</h1>		
<p>Presented to _____</p>		
<p>In recognition of your commitment to serving our nation's Veterans through Veteran Community Partnerships.</p>		
<p>Your continued participation with Veteran Community Partnership national activities has been invaluable toward achieving one of VA's top priorities: Allowing greater healthcare choices for Veterans!</p>		
<p>With deep appreciation and our sincere best wishes for a continued successful partnership.</p>		
<p>Sherri S. DeLoof, LMSW VHA Program Manager, Veteran Community Partnerships, Geriatrics and Extended Care</p>	<p>Leah Christensen, LCSW National Clinical Program Coordinator, Office of Caregiver Support</p>	<p>Marianne Shaughnessy, PhD, CRNP Director, Geriatrics Research, Education and Clinical Centers, Geriatrics and Extended Care</p>
<p>Tracy Weistreich, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, NPD-BC, VHA-CM Nurse Executive, National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships</p>		



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VA



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